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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet summarizes the recommendations of a task force of educational administrators who have experience in school-based management, a process of decentralization of authority based on the beliefs that those most closely affected by decisions ought to play a significant role in making those decisions, and that educational reform efforts will be most effective and long-lasting when carried out by people who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the process. Topics covered in the pamphlet are arranged as responses to the following queries: (1) just what school based management is; (2) why schools are turning to this new management process; (3) how school-based management relates to "teacher empowerment"; (4) how it affects decision-making; (5) how to implement school-based management; and (6) what obstacles districts might face. (TE)

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School-Based Management

EA 020 465

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"School-based management offers realistic hope of improved student and teacher performance." *

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School-Based Management

Read to find out:

- Just what is school-based management.
- Why schools are turning to this new management process.
- How school-based management relates to "teacher empowerment."
- How it affects decision making.
- How to implement school-based management.
- What obstacles districts might face.

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* The free-standing quotes in this publication are from members of the AASA/NAESP/NASSP School-Based Management Task Force.

Dear Colleague:

Schools are searching for dramatic new ways to effectively meet the needs of all children. Teachers, parents, and other community members are seeking to become more involved in the decisions that affect their schools. To pursue these twin goals, many communities are studying and implementing what commonly is called "school-based management."

Because of the potential impact of school-based management on schools and their effectiveness, the three leading organizations of school administrators saw the need for this publication. We wanted to provide interested educators and laymen an overview of the issue, some reasons school leaders might want to consider adopting this new system of school governance, and some tips on how to begin.

School-Based Management: A Strategy for Better Learning summarizes the recommendations of a task force of educational administrators who have experience in school-based management. The task force, convened by the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals, met for two days in July 1988.

Fenwick W. English, professor and head of the Department of Educational Administration of the University of Cincinnati in Ohio, chaired the group and wrote the first draft of the report. Other members of the task force included:

- **Bonita Bill**, principal, Ingleside Elementary School, Norfolk, Virginia
- **David O. Dickson**, superintendent, Hammond Community Schools, Hammond, Indiana
- **Maran Doggett**, principal, Bear Creek High School, Jefferson County, Colorado
- **Delores Henderson**, principal, J.J. Hill Gifted/Talented Magnet School, St. Paul, Minnesota
- **Steve Wareham**, principal, West Potomac High School, Fairfax County, Virginia.
- **John Helfrich**, superintendent, Kenmore-Tonawanda Schools, Kenmore, New York

Kristen J. Amundson, a Washington-based education writer, wrote subsequent drafts of the report. AASA Assistant Communications Director **Luann Fulbright** was the editor and production manager. **Gary Marx**, AASA Associate Executive Director, served as project director.

We express our appreciation to all task force members for their hard work and insightful comments. We know the members of our organizations — and others who are concerned about America's schools — will find this a timely and helpful publication.

Richard D. Miller
Executive Director, AASA

Samuel G. Sava
Executive Director, NAESP

Scott D. Thomson
Executive Director, NASSP

Today
more than ever
American educators recognize
their responsibility to
help students learn.

In an effort to improve student achievement, schools have adopted a number of programs, including more rigorous curricula, an increase in the number of courses required for graduation, and higher teacher salaries.

Now some school districts are beginning to examine whether changing the *way* educational decisions are made can serve as another tool to increase student achievement. This new style of decision making is called "school-based management," "site-based management," or "building-based management." And it offers the promise that, by mobilizing resources at the school level, children's learning *can* be affected.

What Is School-Based Management?

School-based management is a process that involves the individuals responsible for implementing decisions in actually making those decisions. In general, under school-based management, decisions are made at the level closest to the issue being addressed.

When school-based management is working well, more decisions flow *up* through the system than *down* from the top. That means custodians are involved in solving custodial problems, teachers in solving classroom problems, principals in solving building-wide problems, and superintendents in making district-wide decisions.

School-based management is based on two fundamental beliefs:

- Those most closely affected by decisions ought to play a significant role in making those decisions; and
- Educational reform efforts will be most effective and long-lasting when carried out by people who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the process.

Part of a National Trend

Today, many management experts — in the private sector as well as in the public schools — cite the advantages to systems that shift decisions to the levels most directly affected. In *Megatrends,* John Naisbitt points out the trend toward decentralized decision making throughout the private sector. He adds, "People whose lives are affected by a decision must be part of the process of arriving at that decision."

Although Peter Drucker, generally considered the dean of American management experts, does not advocate decentralization as extensive as is contemplated by proponents of school-based management, he does emphasize how important it is for managers to pay attention to the needs of employees:

> One has to assume, first, that the individual human being at work knows better than anyone else what makes him or her more productive, and what is helpful or unhelpful. One assumes, secondly, that to be fully productive, people of knowledge and skill need to take responsibility . . . it requires willingness to ask employees systematically and to listen to their answers.

Finally, a number of management experts are advocating the effectiveness of smaller business units. Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman noted the advantages in their book, *In Search of Excellence.* "The point of smallness," they wrote, "is that it induces manageability and, above all, commitment . . . Smallness works. Small *is* beautiful."

Why Are School Districts Adopting School-Based Management?

An increasing number of school districts have adopted school-based management as a way to improve instruction for all students. Task force members identified a number of advantages to school-based management. It:

- Formally recognizes the expertise and competence of those who work in individual schools to make decisions to improve learning.
- Gives teachers, other staff members, and the community increased input into decisions.
- Improves morale of teachers, because staff members see they can have an immediate impact on their environment.
- Shifts the emphasis in staff development. Teachers are more directly involved in determining what they need.
- Focuses accountability for decisions. One individual — typically the superintendent or a building principal—has ultimate responsibility for any decision.
- Brings both financial and instructional resources in line with the instructional goals developed in each school.
- Helps to provide better services and programs to students.
- Nurtures and stimulates new leaders at all levels. As one task force member said, "Super stars emerge from the process. There is a rebirth."
- Increases both the quantity and the quality of communication, which is more likely to be informal — in face-to-face meetings, for example.

Because school-based management increases the communication among principals, and between the superintendent and principals, effective programs are more likely to be shared quickly with other schools. Increased communication and involvement have other benefits: District-wide decisions are more likely to reflect the needs of individual schools; and staff, parents, and students feel a greater ownership of their school.

How Is School-Based Management Related to 'Empowerment'?

Today, school-based management is typically discussed in terms of "empowering" teachers. Certainly one of the most important advantages of this process is its ability to take full advantage of the expertise of all staff. Teachers, for example, must be significantly involved in making decisions if school-based management is going to work.

But that does not mean that faculty will be involved in making *all* decisions. As one task force member observed, "You just can't vote on every issue." It would be a waste of time, for example, for all faculty to develop a policy on lunchroom behavior. Neither will all teachers be involved in setting curriculum objectives for the district, although some teachers will no doubt participate in drafting recommendations for the school board.

It is clear that school-based management can both empower and enable teachers. They are empowered through shared decision making and they are enabled because the decisions are more likely to support what they are trying to accomplish in the classroom. School-based management should not, however, blur the lines of authority and responsibility. And it should lead to the empowerment of teachers, not just the further empowerment of teacher unions.

Through school-based management, teachers will acquire more autonomy, more freedom to act. Peters and Waterman described the importance of shared values and the kind of autonomy they envision can occur:

> A set of shared values and rules about discipline, details, and execution can provide the framework in which practical autonomy takes place routinely . . .. Too much overbearing discipline of the wrong kind will kill autonomy. But the more rigid discipline, the discipline based on a small number of shared values . . . in fact, induces practical autonomy and experimentation throughout the organization.

Tom Peters, in *Thriving on Chaos*, also spoke positively about empowerment and shared values. The most effective leaders, he noted, "empower others to act — and grow — in support of a course that both leaders and followers find worthy." He added that a commitment to shared values is essential to retaining control over a decentralized decision-making process. "The autonomy granted is real and significant, but it is matched by the psychological pressure to perform up to one's limits and to the highest standards."

Finally, it is important to remember that school boards have the legal authority for local school districts, and they have delegated significant authority to school superintendents and principals. School-based management does *not* change the legal governance system of schools. School boards do not give up authority by sharing authority. And local school decision-making bodies will *not* become "mini school boards."

Where Will Decisions Be Made?

Under a system of school-based management, these are some decisions that might be made at the local school level:

- Developing educational priorities for the building, based on the district's priorities, but taking into account the special needs of students.
- Developing new programs to meet the needs of a school's student population.
- Developing scheduling to meet instructional objectives.
- Allocating a building's resources to meet best the needs of the students.
- Determining professional development programs to meet faculty needs.
- Selecting supplemental instructional materials.
- Selecting applicants from a pool of prescreened candidates.

At the District Level

These decisions would continue to be made at the district level, with involvement by staff from appropriate levels:

- Developing district-wide priorities.
- Developing educational objectives for students at each grade level.
- Developing curriculum to meet those educational objectives.
- Determining the district's educational budget.
- Supervising capital expenditures — new construction, major repairs, etc.
- Selecting textbooks.
- Selecting principals.
- Screening applicants for jobs, with the actual selection made at the building level.

What Roles Will People Play?

Role of Principal

Studies conducted for the past 20 years have clearly underscored the pivotal role of the principal in improving school effectiveness. The research can be summed up in a single sentence: Effective schools have effective leaders.

The principal is the only one in a school building who sees the whole school. That gives the principal an even more important role to play in a system of school-based management. Although many other members of the school community will be involved in making decisions, the principal will have the unique perspective of seeing all aspects of the school.

Just as the superintendent must be the educational leader of the district, so the principal must be the instructional leader of the school.

Principals will assume increased authority and responsibility under a system of school-based management. Principals will be given greater dis-

cretion in determining budget priorities, establishing staffing patterns, and developing educational programs to meet district-wide objectives.

What are some of the areas in which principals must be proficient? Some superintendents suggest:

- Instructional leadership and curriculum awareness
- Business management
- Personnel management
- Facilities, maintenance, and property management
- Security
- Counseling
- Communicating
- Community relations.

Along with the increased *authority* for making decisions comes increased *accountability*. Schools will be expected to develop a clear set of educational objectives — and then have their performance in meeting those objectives monitored. Principals whose schools are consistently unable to meet their educational objectives may be removed.

Roles of Others

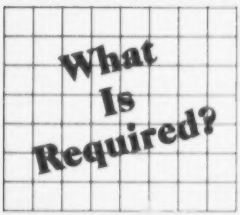
While principals will play a pivotal role in a system of school-based management, as the National Governors' Association pointed out in *Time for Results*, "Effective leadership is not the sole responsibility of the principal." Under a system of school-based management, others in the school community — including teachers and parents — will participate in designing programs that will meet the school's educational objectives.

Teachers will have more input into the educational decisions that are made, including — but not limited to — decisions about school climate; student attendance; discipline policies; selection of materials in concert with district policy; teaching methods and strategies; staff development; and goal setting at the school level.

Other staff members will assume greater responsibilities for decisions about their work. Parents and other community members will play an active role in helping schools interpret and serve the needs of children. And superintendents will be responsible for setting and achieving district goals, communicating shared values, and building support for the schools among everyone in the community.

The school board will play a pivotal role in supporting school-based management. First, board members must understand how the system works and give it their support. Second, they must be cautious about overturning decisions made at the school or district level. Otherwise, the process will lose credibility and, ultimately, effectiveness.

Implementing School-Based Management



Ongoing district support. School-based management involves a fundamental change in the way school districts make decisions. To be successful, the school board and the superintendent must solidly support the new system. For this reason, the board and the superintendent should explore the idea carefully before opening up a public discussion of school-based management.

Training. Districts that have been successful in establishing school-based management have made substantial investments in training during the early years of implementation. Training often focuses on developing decision-making skills, learning how to build consensus, brainstorming, creative problem solving, and group dynamics. In addition, principals may require additional training in leadership skills.

New budgeting practices. School-based management also means school-based budgeting. That

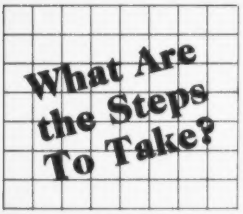
doesn't mean schools can spend whatever they want; but it *does* mean that once the overall district budget is established, individual schools will have greater latitude in determining how *best* to allocate resources to meet their needs. Under school-based management, budgeting shifts from allocation by formulas (X dollars per pupil for textbooks, X dollars per pupil for science equipment) to an allocation by objective. In turn, schools are much more accountable for the *results* they achieve.

Time. School-based management involves the entire school community in establishing school objectives, developing programs to meet those objectives, implementing the programs, and monitoring program success. Obviously, such a process takes time. School-based management, therefore, cannot be considered a "quick fix."

Access to information. Any decision is only as good as the information on which it is based. Under school-based management, schools will require accurate and timely information for their decision making. An important role of central office administrators will be ensuring that schools receive the information they need.

Communication. School-based management is an *inclusionary* process. Principals, teachers, parents, and community members are involved in making significant decisions about schools. In some cases, changes in collective bargaining agreements will be necessary. In other cases, school board policies may need to be adjusted. For school-based management to work, systematic communication among *everyone* involved in the process must be a high priority.

"School-based management taps the problem-solving ability of principals and teachers, thus energizing their competence as professionals."



1 **Develop awareness throughout the system.** Invite the school board, administrators, teachers, and other interested community members to learn as much as possible about school-based management.

2 **Determine whether your school or system is ready.** The key here is open communication. If participants have varying expectations about the system, implementation will be more difficult.

3 **Establish a development committee.** The composition of this committee should be representative, similar to the school-based committees that eventually will be set up — with teachers, parents, administrators, and community members.

4 **Survey and assess.** The first responsibility of the committee should be to survey the community. What are the educational aspirations of the community? What are the strengths of the schools? What are unmet needs?

5 **Set goals and objectives.** The district must first establish educational objectives, and then each local school can develop its own goals.

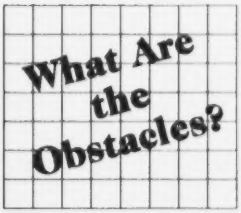
6 **Decide on a time line.** Districts that have been most effective in implementing school-based management have built in a generous amount of lead time. Training, selection of school-based committees, improving access to information, and setting up new budgeting procedures are just some of the things that need to take place before the system is implemented.

7 **Decide on an approach for implementation.** In some large districts, it may be advisable to pilot test the school-based management program in a limited number of schools during the first year. Other districts, however, may decide it is best to implement the program in all schools.

8 **Train.** Principals, teachers, other staff, and members of school-based committees will need special training.

9 **Implement the program.** Districts that have established programs of school-based management recommend that school-based committees look for at least some issues that can provide immediate and visible indications that the program is working. In other words, while a committee is grappling with how to improve school-wide reading scores, it might also examine a more effective way to handle public address announcements that interrupt classes throughout the day.

10 **Monitor, evaluate, adjust.** As with any new program, adjustments will be required. If a monitoring system is in place before school-based management begins, it will be easier to make a number of minor "course corrections" rather than having to face a major overhaul in the system at the end of the year.



The absence of any one of the factors listed in the section, "What Is Required?," will be an obstacle to successful school-based management. So will the omission of any of the listed steps. The following, too, may be obstacles to overcome when implementing school-based management:

1 **Expectations that are too high.** School-based management is not a panacea for solving all of a school or district's problems. School-based management *can* increase involvement in decision making and it can lead to better decisions. Districts that have been most successful in implementing school-based management have focused expectations on these two benefits.

2 **Inappropriate "downsizing."** When school boards and their superintendents consider implementing school-based management, they —

like their peers in the business sector — might also consider the possibility of "downsizing" the administrative staff. Pressure to do so might come from teacher groups and citizens, who might ask for "trade-offs." That is, they might ask, "With this new system, how can we reallocate funds? With more decisions being made at the school level, and with broader involvement by staff, won't we need fewer administrators?" While the role of some administrators might change, every effort should be made to assure that the process of reducing administrative personnel does not jeopardize the effectiveness of school-based management.

3 **Some collective bargaining agreements.** School-based management will probably require some changes in a district's collective bargaining agreement. As Michael Schoeppach, UniServ Director of the Washington Education Association, says in "Site-Based Decision Making: In Conflict or in Harmony with Collective Bargaining?":

> In places where collective bargaining is the established process for managing labor relations between educational employees and an employing school district, the introduction of these concepts may be threatening to those who are comfortable with and confident in the traditional approach in which collective bargaining is the preferred process for addressing employee interests.

Many school districts and teacher organizations, however, have been successful in negotiating contracts that foster school-based management.

4 **Inaccurate beliefs about equity.** In some districts, a concern about educational equity has led to a requirement that all schools follow exactly the same procedures and have exactly the same programs. But because the students they serve are not the same, school programs cannot be the same. When equity is synonymous with uniformity, the needs of some children are inevitably shortchanged.

5 **State initiatives.** In some states, legislatures have become involved in micro-managing

the schools. This has led to an emphasis on increased uniformity among districts. For school-based management to be most effective, some districts may need to work with the legislature and the state department of education. Districts might, for example, ensure that the objectives of the state program would be achieved, but without following state-mandated procedures. Several states have already adopted this approach with districts that have implemented school-based management.

6 Skepticism. For a number of reasons, teachers, principals, and other staff might be skeptical or critical of school-based management. Some teachers might say they want to "leave the management of the schools" up to administrators. Others might view school-based management as "another new fad," soon to disappear. And because school-based management means new procedures and puts different demands on teachers' and administrators' time and skills, some will be reluctant or even fearful. Some skepticism is normal; it even can be beneficial, resulting in new ideas and approaches. "The thing that seems to work best with these people," according to one task force member, "is to involve them early in the development program. Most, if not all, will get on board if given enough time and care." Appropriate training also is a must.

"We cannot work from the assumption that everyone wants shared decision making."

FICTION: School-based management is only a problem-solving technique.
FACT: Districts that have been most successful in establishing school-based management use it to help develop a "vision of excellence" for the schools. In these districts, teachers, administrators, other staff, parents, and other community members work together to set long- and short-range goals . . . and then develop plans and educational programs to meet those goals.

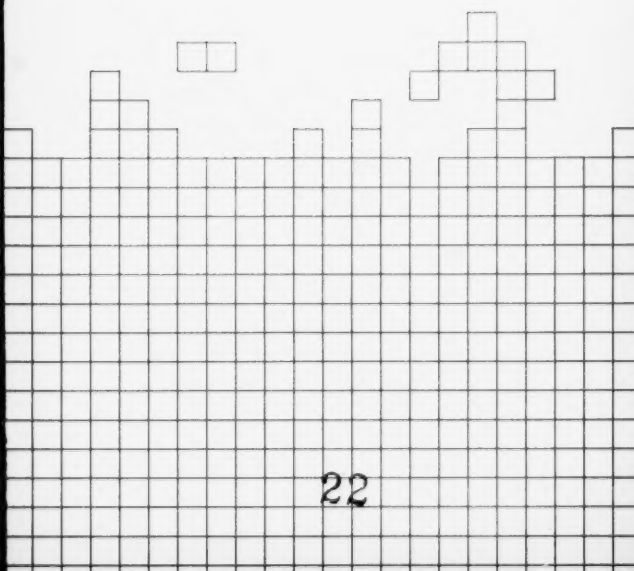
FICTION: School-based management will increase the disparity among schools within a school district.
FACT: School districts will continue to establish certain standards to ensure equality of educational opportunity. Student services, textbooks, and curriculum objectives are among the decisions that will probably remain at the school district level. But because the children they serve are different, schools need to adopt different programs and perhaps supplemental materials. School-based management allows schools to match available resources to the needs of their students.

FICTION: School-based management will eliminate the need for central office administrators.
FACT: While the *role* of central office administrators may change, the *need* for them will not. Under a system of school-based management, central office administrators will provide leadership, support, information, and assistance to local schools. Peter Drucker notes in *The Frontiers of Management*, "As more information becomes available, fewer levels of management but more specialists of all kinds are needed."

FICTION: School-based management will eliminate the need for building principals.
FACT: Principals will become even more important because of their ability to coordinate the efforts of various groups and the need to hold someone accountable for building-level decisions. As one task force member said, "If principals didn't exist before school-based management, they'd have to be created to carry out the system."

Schools need continually to seek the best fit between students and their learning environment. To reach this goal, individual principals and teachers require the flexibility that local decision making provides and the professional commitment that comes from having a hand in significant school-level decisions.

School-based management is a strategy whose time has come. It weds the best thinking about modern management with the need to professionalize teaching. The result will be an enriched climate both for educators and for students . . . and better learning for all our nation's students.



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